

this enzyme activity, but some are not, such as quinidine and quinine (Brosen et al 1990; Wanwimolruk & Chalcroft 1991). Therefore, we cannot conclude that amiodarone and DEA are substrates of CYP2D6 in man or of CYP2D1 in rats. However, previous studies in female Dark-Agouti rats, an animal model of genetic debrisoquine hydroxylation deficiency, revealed that concentrations of amiodarone and DEA in plasma and liver were increased in this rat strain (Pirovino et al 1990). This suggested that the metabolism of amiodarone and DEA to other metabolites may in part co-segregate with debrisoquine 4-hydroxylation/dextromethorphan *O*-demethylation; further studies are required to investigate the clinical relevance of drug interaction between amiodarone and its metabolite and other drugs which co-segregate with debrisoquine/dextromethorphan, and to elucidate the metabolic pathways of amiodarone and its metabolite.

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## Book Review

### Indian Medicinal Plants. A Compendium of 500 Species.

#### Vol. 1

Edited by P. K. Warrier, V. P. K. Nambiar and C. Ramankutty

Published 1993 Orient Longman Limited, Madras 394 pages

ISBN 0 86311 464 4 £25.95

When I was asked to review this book, my heart sank somewhat. What? Yet another volume on Indian medicinal plants? Not one volume exactly, but the first in a series of five volumes which will list alphabetically 500 plant species used in the Ayurveda system of alternative medicine. Volume 1 runs from *Abelmoschus esculentus* to *Carthamus tinctorius*. Each entry includes Latin name, common names, distribution in India, morphological description, parts used and then medicinal properties and uses. For the Indian reader, there then follow some quotations from ancient verse texts. Notes follow if there is some uncertainty about the botanical identity of the plant in question. There are black and white line illustrations for each

plant, as well as the occasional colour plate to brighten up the proceedings.

Plants used in the Ayurveda system include a number which are not normally classified as medicinal, such as the onion, pineapple, beetroot, peanut, cabbage and so on. Also, plants used chiefly as a source of colouring (e.g. *Bixa*) or insecticide (e.g. *Azadirachta*) are included. The possible hazards of imbibing some plant extracts are rarely mentioned. The entry under *Abrus precatorius* does not stress the very toxic nature of the seed protein or that the leaves are non-poisonous. What is also missing is any information on either the chemistry of the active principles or anything on the phytochemistry. Whether you buy this book or not will depend on how committed you are to the Ayurveda system of complementary medicine. Otherwise, it will provide the ethnobotanist with a list of plants and their reputed properties, as well as a means of checking the accurate identity of an uncertain plant specimen without going to the herbarium.

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